

STONE MEN OF MALEKULA

512 common way leading to the village, go together into their dwelling enclosures, where the women set about cooking, while the men glance around their property to see that everything is in order and no untoward circumstance has occurred during the day. If we now accompany a man 353 into his house we shall see, firstly, at the far end and somewhat to one side, the pit for his earth-oven, and, on the other side, a small bamboo [252] frame, furnished with wooden pillow, and covered with a mat roughly plaited from the fronds of coconut leaves, which is his bed. If a young son is living with him, there will be two. Both beds are on what is called [513] the "Upper" side of the house. This may be either side, but once chosen cannot be altered. Stuck into the thatch, or hooked on to the rafters which support it, dried and preserved with the smoke of innumerable fires, are the objects he treasures. Polished stone blades hafted to adze-shaped handles for heavy garden work, felling of trees, cutting of roots. Shell [412] adze blades, similarly hafted, for carving and for hollowing out canoes and gongs. Both these in many different sizes, and the latter of different shells, the larger ground down from giant clams and the smaller from small spiral shells. The delicate jaws of flying foxes, bracelets of pigs' tusks or turbo shell, arm-badges such as have been already mentioned. Feathered head-dresses for various occasions, badges of office or of Maki degree. Bunches of leaves for magic. If he is a sorcerer or rain-maker he will have, hidden away, the carved rain-stones and much other paraphernalia essential to his trade.

Cooking the evening meal.

252 Having surveyed these, the native home from his garden will decide whether to eat in his own dwelling-house or with his fellows in the precincts of the Lodge. If at home, his wife cooks for him, though not on her fire but on his. More usually, however, he will go to the Lodge. Here other men of his joint-family are gathered. Inside the Lodge the large earth-oven, a hole dug in the ground, sometimes surrounded by a lining of stones, is emptied. Fresh firewood is brought and kindled, or the old fire made up. On this round pebbles are laid to heat. Meanwhile the evening meal is being prepared. Yams, the staple diet, are scraped on to a leaf. If the day is an ordinary one, and no sacrifice has been recently performed, the only adjuncts are such small titbits as have been gathered during the day—an odd breadfruit or two, leaves of the native "cabbage," a flying fox, fish, shell-fish, turtles' eggs, prawns, eels, but if there has been a sacrifice, parts of a pig, or fowl. These are all placed on the yam-scrappings, and a fresh layer of these placed on top. Then the whole pudding is wrapped in layer upon layer of leaves so as to preserve it from direct contact with the fire or earth, and to keep in the juices. Meanwhile the pebbles placed on the fire have become red-hot. Half these are now removed by means of wooden tongs, and the wrapped

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They take hold of a young pig that has already got its permanent teeth. . . Its owner sits on a tree trunk or other convenient seat, and holds its head fast between his hands; horizontally across its open mouth is placed a piece of wood to prevent it from biting; then the operator kneels in front of the patient. Armed with a kind of chisel cut from the branch of an orange tree, and with a hammer, or simply a stone, he taps repeatedly one side of the tooth¹ and then the other. In this way, it takes a whole morning to extract the first canine; at midday they rest, so does the animal; it takes the rest of the day to finish the operation. Before letting the animal go, they rub ashes into the still bleeding gums.²

"After a year, that is to say when the canines of the lower jaw have grown sufficiently to push up the cheeks,³ they lead the animal on to the dancing-ground one day when some rite is in progress; it then undergoes its first consecration, other pigs being sacrificed for it; then it is declared *ni-mal*.⁴ Three years later, when the tusks have made a complete circle, it is consecrated for a second time; it then becomes *meltek*.⁵ When the tusk has completed its second circle, the pig will be consecrated *na-humbe*⁷ and, some time later, *na-humbe se*.⁷

"These three honours, these three ranks, will be transferred to its owner on the ritual occasion when the latter sacrifices it.

"Meanwhile, it is itself, from the moment of its first consecration, elevated to the dignity of man.⁸ This consecration into the rank of *ni-mal* confers on it the initial stages of the soul of a chief⁹—which perfects itself when it attains the rank of *meltek* and attains the apotheosis of honour when it becomes *na-humbe se*.

"Here are the proofs. From the day when it becomes *ni-mal*, by taking this rank in the dancing-ground, the pig becomes, for its owner, the object of a semi-religious respect; at all events he treats it as his equal. He feeds it with the remains of his own meals and builds for it a small hut, not very imposing, it is true, but at least a shelter where he keeps it tied up night and day, for it may no more run about.

"When they are moved, these 'lord pigs' are treated with the greatest respect, never hit or insulted in any way. When they are at rest, their movements are followed, their looks observed . . . a meaning is found for their grunts and for their sighs. With what loving attention their well-being and comfort is cared for!"

¹ I.e. the upper canine (*batin(e)*); cf. *Mota batiu*, also applied to the eye-teeth in men.

² A full account of this operation as performed on Atchin will be given in a future volume. Ashes are frequently used as a disinfectant (see p. 511).

³ I.e. the pig has become a crescent-tusker.

⁴ He does not say what rite.

⁵ This is a Maki title (see pp. 431, 433).

⁶ This is another Maki title.

⁷ These are not properly speaking titles, but terms of respect (see pp. 220, 432, 693).

⁸ As we have seen above, it is actually the dignity of "ghost."

⁹ As elsewhere, Godefroy uses the term "chief" to denote "man of high rank."